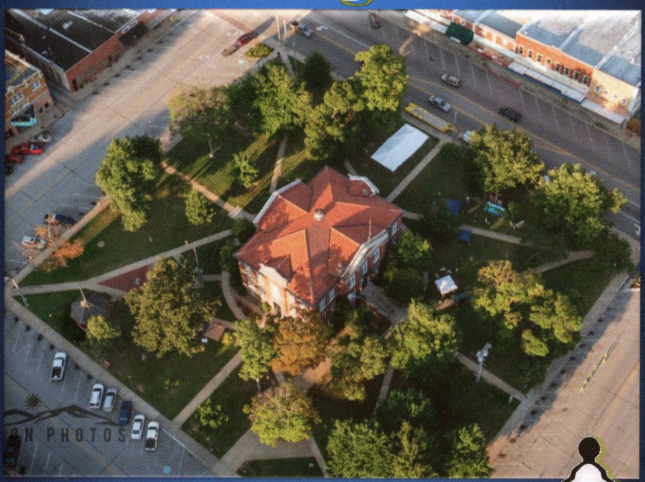
Historic Harrison

Self-Guided Walking Tour



HARRISON
ARKANSAS

est. March 1, 1876

Harrison, Arkansas

Harrison, the county seat of Boone County, is located in northwest Arkansas in the beautiful Ozark Mountains. Harrison is just north of the Buffalo National River. On March 1, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed into law the Buffalo National River as the first National River in the United States. The project was spearheaded by the late Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt of Harrison. Boone County lies 36° N Latitude and 16° Longitude W of Washington D.C. Elevation is 1,250 feet above sea level.

Indians are believed to be the first inhabitants of the area, the first probably being the 'Bluff Dweller', who lived in caves in the bluffs along the rivers. In later times, the Osage, a branch of the Sioux, were the main tribe in the Ozarks and one of their larger villages is thought to have been to the east of the present site of Harrison. The Shawnee, Quapaw, and Caddo Indians were also familiar to the area. The Cherokee arrived around 1816 and could not get along with the Osage. This hostility erupted into a full scale Indian war in the Ozark Mountains. By the 1830's, both tribes were relocated to Oklahoma. Some historians contend that the first white man to visit the area were some forty followers of Hernando de Soto and that they camped at an Indian village on the White River at the mouth of Bear Creek. It is more probable that the first white men were French hunters or trappers who followed the course of the White River.

During the ensuing decades, Harrison, Arkansas and the surrounding community thrived on agricultural production and trade. From cattle farming to the occasional crop production and eventually poultry farming, the Harrison community has a history of hard work and success.

(870) 741-1789

1. The People's Bank

This historic building, now known as the Coffman Center, is at the corner of Stephenson and Willow.

Henry Starr, a well known bank robber, movie star and supposed nephew of the infamous Belle Starr attempted to rob the bank in 1921. The first ever attempted bank robbery in the history of Harrison occurred just after 10:00am at the People's State Bank when Henry Starr and accomplices entered the bank with guns drawn. Starr ordered WJ Myers and the bank bookkeeper into the bank vault. After entering the vault, Myers grabbed an 1873 model .38 caliber Winchester rifle that unbeknownst to Starr, was hidden inside and shot Starr in the back. Starr's men fled the bank in a Nash car (it was the first time Starr had a car as the getaway rather than horses) and escaped over the Crooked Creek bridge. The bandits exchanged fire with Myers and bank president Marvin Wagley, who'd rushed out of the bank and fired on them as they sped away.

Henry Starr was taken to the jail and physicians were summoned. The ball had penetrated into a vital part of his body inflicting partial paralysis. Starr battled four days against death before passing. His body was prepared for shipment by *RD Cline Undertaking* and displayed for a short time for public viewing. Family and friends left on the afternoon train the next day for Dewey, Oklahoma, where Starr was buried beside his sister and his child.

During his 32 years in crime, it is rumored that Henry Starr robbed more banks than any other outlaw or gang, netting over $60,000 from more than 21 bank robberies. He adhered to the *outlaw code*, never snitching on any of his partners in crime. He became a legend, romanticized as the last of a breed of Wild West horseback outlaws, which gave way to a deadly breed of machine gun-toting outlaws without code or compunction.

The Boone County Heritage Museum houses the gun that shot Henry Starr, as well as other historic accounts from that fateful day.

2. The Boone County Courthouse

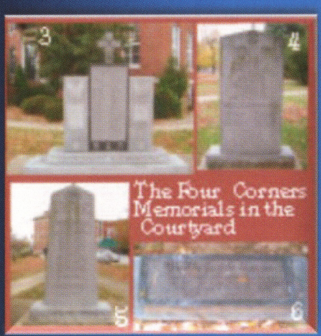
Located in the center of the town square's courtyard, the current courthouse was built in 1909 after the original one burned on July 4, 1908. The fire was blamed on (due to an accident involving) a fireworks display conducted from the roof. Some believed that it was caused by a new fangled device that was used to display pictures onto a screen on the side of the building. However, it is said there was a report filed stating that the fire was set by someone trying to destroy evidence in a court case. On October 10, 1908, a resolution was unanimously adopted providing for the early erection, upon the old site in the public square at Harrison, a fire-proof courthouse building, including all the modern conveniences of steam heat, water etc., and not to exceed $35,000.

3. 4. 5. & 6. Four Corners Memorials

The County Courtyard is home to various memorials.

3. The Boone County War Memorial is located on the NW corner and pays tribute to the veterans of World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. A special memorial to Jack Williams, a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient adorns the top of it.

4. A bench honoring WWI veterans and the Mountain Meadows Massacre Memorial is located on the NE corner.



5. A Spanish American War Tribute and a Confederate Memorial is located on the SE corner.

6. A monument reaffirming the Constitution of the United States is located on the SW corner.

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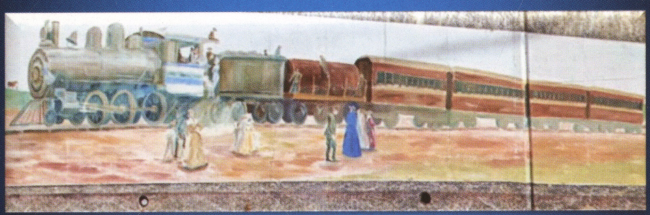
7. The Montgomery Ward Building

Located at 120 N Willow on the west side of the square, this structure was built in 1929 by JW Bass. The "Ward's building" as it is often referred to was in business for 50 years under that name. Once one of the finest retailers in the country, the Harrison store was *the* shopping center of the area. Since that time it has served as everything from an antique store to a restaurant and a flea market. Today, it houses Fraley's Furniture and Appliances. In the early days, it was rumored to be frequented by Jimmy Angel, a Boone County resident and discoverer of Angel Falls in Venezuela.

8. The West Rush Historic Mural

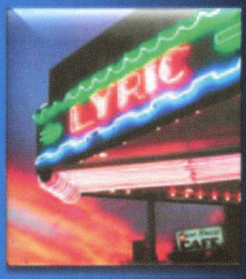
Located on the bend on W Rush Avenue, one block from the square, the murals depict historic events and known charters from Harrison's past. The tire shop scene is from the original 555 Firestone Shop. The wagon trade scene represents the migration of Boone County residents to Utah that eventually led to the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The scene with



the wagons and mules represent the first Boone County settlers and the methods they used to collect water. The Harrison square is circa late 19th century. The Buffalo River scene with the Elk represents the historical Ponca/Boxley area. The train scene represents the M & NA Railway that is highlighted later in the tour.

9. The Lyric Theatre

Built in 1929 by JW Bass for the "talkies," (movies with sound) the Lyric, located on the historic downtown square originally had a seating capacity of 409. The first movie with sound shown in Harrison was a movie from Universal Pictures called *Broadway*, shown at the Lyric Theatre on November 7, 1929. It operated until 1977 when it closed its doors. The Lyric remained vacant for ten years until Glenna Ragan purchased the building and used it for special events to prevent the demolition of the building. In 1999, the Ozark Arts Council acquired The Lyric and began a renovation project on the theatre to bring it back to its original Art Deco appearance.



The Lyric Theatre's most remarkable features are the beautiful luminescent murals on the walls of the theatre, painted by Depression-era Hobos, who did the work in exchange for food and shelter. To this day, nobody knows the names of the Hobos who painted those famous murals.

The theatre now seating 365, hosts live performances and concerts, as well as screening classic movies.

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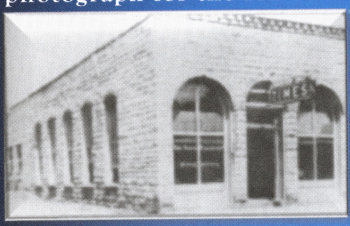
10. The Harrison Daily Times

Built in 1876, the Harrison Daily Times is located on the north side of the Historic Square on W Rush. The façade has been updated many times and the interior has undergone a total transformation in recent years. The HDT, Harrison's very own local newspaper was founded by the Newman family, and later ran by the Dunlap and Christenson families. Community Publishers, Inc. purchased the HDT in 2000 and sold it to Phillips Media Group, Inc. in 2015. Keep a lookout for one of the original family members, Lee "Flash" Dunlap who continues to photograph for the HDT.



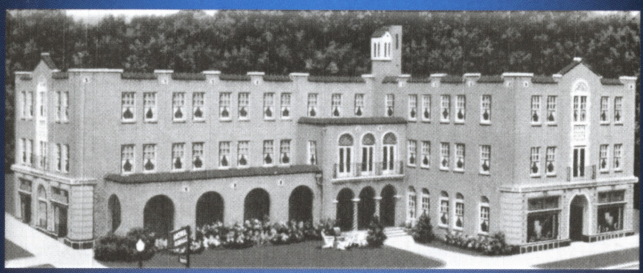
Harrison, Arkansas

Originally part of Carroll County, during reconstruction after the Civil War, land was divided and Boone County was created in 1869. Shortly afterward, Union Colonel Marcus LaRue Harrison, a surveyor, was asked to lay out a town along Crooked Creek at Stiffler Spring. The town of Harrison was named in his honor and was incorporated on March 1, 1876. The people of both Harrison and Bellefonte (located 3 miles east of Harrison) each wanted the county seat for their town and this caused a great deal of friction. Harrison experienced opposition to its position as county seat. Civil War sentiment drove the Democratic, Confederate-leaning residents of Bellefonte to challenge the Republican, Union-leaning residents of Harrison for the designation of county seat. A hard-fought election ensued. Newspapers carried reports of murder attempts and corruption. Muskets were rumored to have been slipped into Harrison in boxes marked "Records." However, a countywide vote resulted in Harrison winning the position of county seat. The story goes that Harrison won by two votes that were bought with a watermelon. For further history of Harrison and Boone County, the 1986 Sesquicentennial edition is available at the Harrison Daily Times office.

www.HarrisonArkansas.org

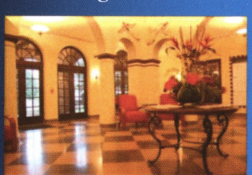
11. The 1929 Hotel Seville

This historic hotel is located at the NW corner of Main and W Ridge, opened for business on October 5, 1929, and served as the center of Harrison's social life for the next three decades. The Continental Hotel Company of Springfield, MO, commissioned architect Eugene Johnson to design the Spanish Revival-style hotel at a cost of $135,000. The building is an excellent example of



the Spanish Revival style with its smooth brick façade ornamented with tile and terra cotta, rounded arch openings, and wrought-iron grillwork. An addition to the west of the original hotel was constructed in 1963. Competition from

modern hotels caused its closing as a hotel by the mid-to-late 1960s. In 1970, Defenders of the Christian Faith of Wichita, KS, acquired the building and used it to house and feed the elderly.



In 1978 it was sold again and became The Townhouse, which was used for a similar purpose, housing for the elderly. In April 2008 it was sold again and went through a massive renovation. This historic hotel was restored to its original beauty and is now a fully-functioning hotel and restaurant.

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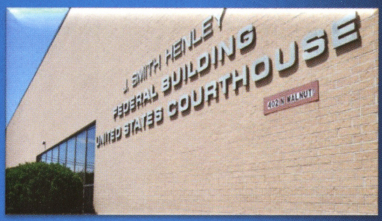
12. The Federal Building

Headquarters Of Buffalo River National Park

While not a historic building, it is significant historically because it represents the impressive effort of our local legend, the late US Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt to prevent the damming of the Buffalo River. John Paul was born and raised in Harrison and graduated from the Old Harrison High School. He served 13 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was an icon of Arkansas and Washington politics.

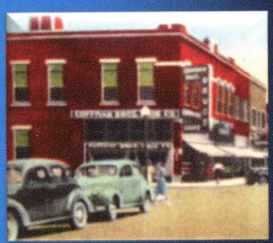


13. The Old Federal Building

Completed in 1903, the Old Federal Building is located on the NE corner of Main and Rush. It served as the Post Office from 1906-1965. It had a large public lobby with tiled floors and marble wainscoting, a large work room, two large vaults, restrooms (called closets at that time) with hot and cold water, and a private office for the postmaster. The three story (plus basement) building was constructed at an original cost of $78,000 with a total floor space in excess of 20,000 square feet. It was constructed of hard-burned, dark red brick with white mortar and facings of hard limestone with terra cotta cornices. The first floor is 16 feet high and originally housed the local Post Office. The second floor was devoted to the US Court. Cow tracks are still present in the west sidewalk. The building is now owned by Boone County and houses county and state funded offices and courtrooms.

14. The M & NA Railroad

The Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Office building (originally the St Louis & North Arkansas Railroad) is located on the NE side of the historic square. With the success and development that the railroad brought to Eureka Springs, it was not long before other communities in Northern Arkansas hoped to share in the growth and development. Construction of the original Trestle #78-7 in 1900 was completed in 1901. Trestle #78-7 measured 238 feet long, about 57-67 feet high and built completely of wood. Trestle #78-7 was originally built as a frame trestle but was later rebuilt as a pile trestle after a fire in 1923 that caused significant damage. It is the largest wooden railroad trestle built on the North Arkansas Line and is the only example of a wooden railroad trestle built in Carroll County. On March 22, 1901, the last spike was driven into the line at Harrison and the first train, consisting of a couple of flat cars of crossties pulled by Engine #3, was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd.



In 1912 the M & NA decided to relocate their offices to Harrison. In support of the railroad, the city residents raised $25,000 for the construction of railroad offices to be located above the Coffman Bros Drug store. The building was built in 1913 to house the general offices on the second floor. Plagued by misfortune and natural disaster for many years, the railroad was ultimately abandoned in the 1960's. Later, Jim Dye Drug and a confectionary occupied the first floor for many years, and is now home to Sam Alexander Pharmacy. The former M & NA offices were converted into a luxury residence for the Alexander family and now houses a multitude of precious antiques and collectibles.

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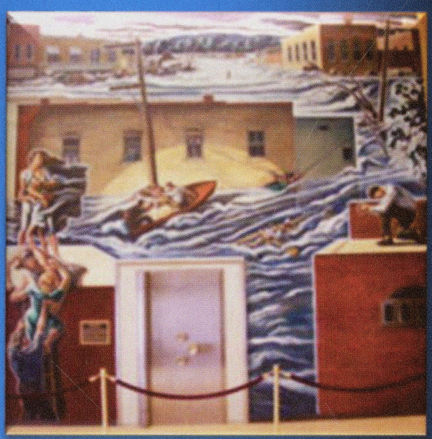
15. The First National Bank

This historic building is the former location of First National Bank and home to the Harrison

Flood of 1961 Mural located inside the Main Lobby. The 100-year flood occurred on May 7, 1961 with the city suffering the greatest disaster in history. This historic event commanded both national and international news coverage and completely destroyed all of the structures near the Crooked Creek. Four lives were lost, 3/4's of the square was ravaged by flood waters causing $5.4 million in property loss and destruction of 80% of the business district. The day that downtown Harrison flooded is depicted in a the mural by noted artist Louis Freund. Done in oil on linen canvas, the mural was completed in 1965, four years after the devastating flood. The mural features actual flood victims and records scenes that were recounted by eyewitnesses of the event. Freund's depiction of two men in a boat pulling a victim out of the water is a visualization of an account which was written in the Harrison Daily Times, as was the account of the man clinging to the top of a sign. Freund painted local resident Mayor Robert 'Bob' Reynolds standing on top of his clothing store, Walters Dry Goods Co (pictured above). In the lower left-hand corner, Freund depicted Thom Thomlinson, minister of the First Presbyterian Church, as he knelt in prayer on the roof of a building.



16. The Walters Building

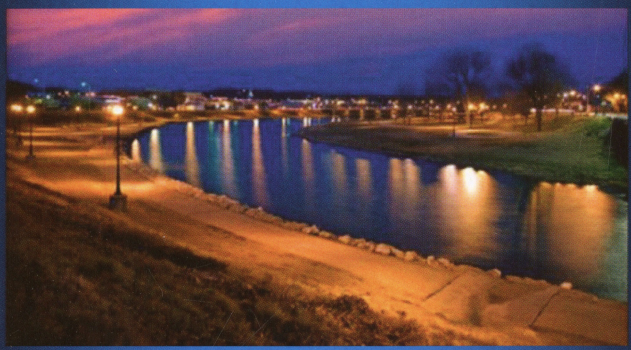
Built in 1912 as two separate buildings with a firewall, this building is known as the Walters Building. Founded in 1867 in Woolum by JH Walters, the store later moved to St. Joe, and in 1897, it moved to Harrison (was located on south side of square). Mr. Walters' sons, Alexander and William, joined him in the business. JH Walters died in 1909, and in 1913 two men, Lawson and Durnil opened Jackson Clothing Co. in the northern storefront. Later Lawson, Durnil, and TL Jackson bought out the Walters family and incorporated the business as Walters Dry Goods Co, Inc. Jackson Clothing Co. kept its name for several years before merging with Walters. At that time, they cut doorways through the interior wall to allow people to pass between buildings and offered clothing, shoes, jewelry, and cosmetics. In 1958 the store was purchased by Verl Hudspeth, Ben N. Henley, Robert 'Bob' Reynolds, and Ben C. Henley and the name was changed then to Walters, Inc. Bob Reynolds, former mayor of Harrison is the man depicted on top of the Walters Building in the 1961 flood mural inside the First National Bank.

17. The Old Boone County Jail

This historic site was built in 1914 and is located at the corner of Central and S Willow. It served as a jail and sheriff's residence until 1976. Prior to the construction of the jail, this site was the location of the last legal hanging in Harrison. In 1913, Odus Davidson, a Caucasian male was convicted and hanged for the brutal murder of Ella Barham. A great crowd attended the hanging and afterwards, the rope used to hang Davidson was cut into short lengths and handed out as souvenirs. Odus professed his innocence until the end. In fact, some of the Barham family believed in his innocence and instead thought it was Odus' brother-in-law, Charley Martin who committed the murder. It is said that Martin confessed to the crime on his deathbed in California many years later.

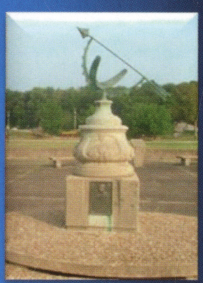
18. Lake Harrison Recreation Area

Our very own Lake Harrison was formed by the weir over Crooked Creek on the east end of Lake Harrison Park. This was the source of the infamous flood of 1961 that caused major devastation to the downtown and received national attention. The modification of this area has reduced the risk of future damage to the town and now boasts attractive walking and running trails, tennis courts, playground, and a soccer complex on the SW end of the park.



19. Stiffler Spring

This natural spring runs year-round and joins Lake Harrison on the north side of the lake at about the 1/2 way point. For many years, this spring was the primary water source for the community and also one of the main reasons for selecting this site for the town. There is evidence that the spring was also a popular settlement area for the Native American tribes of the Osage and Cherokee. It is named after the original land owner Albert Stiffler who settled at the point where the spring originates. The Stiffler settlement, along with the Crooked Creek Post Office settlement, named after the creek that continues to run through the county, were later joined to establish what is now known as Harrison.



The site is now a small park that serves as a memorial to several area residents, displaying memorial plaques for each.

20. Queen Anne House B & B

This historic house was constructed by William M. Duncan in 1893 and is a prime example of the Queen Anne style of architecture. Mr. Duncan, son of a Pennsylvania congressman, was most famous as a builder of this Queen Anne House and the Basin Park Hotel in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. He also founded the bank of Harrison.

The home has had many important local residents as owners. According to handwritten notes found in the house, its first residents, John and Ella McMurray purchased the house for $1,000. Reverend D. Shuck purchased the home in 1905 for $600 and maintained the home as a parsonage for the Christian Church of Harrison. He wrote his Sunday sermons upstairs where the light from above shone down upon him, giving him peace and inspiration in the area that is now known as the Turret Room. William Noah and Minnie Vaughan Ivie, lived in the home from about 1912-1915. Mr. Ivie was a self taught US attorney appointed by Herbert Hoover's administration. City Marshall JP Callicott and his wife Gertrude acquired the home in 1919. He was a quiet man who sat by a wood stove for many hours at a time and smoked his pipe in what is now the lobby. The home was gifted to Mrs. Ragland and her daughter, Walsa Castleberry in January of 1943. Both were school teachers and gave piano lessons in the parlor. In 1986 the home was purchased by Sheridan and Cynthia Garrison. Cynthia performed a major restoration of the home. Sheridan, a shipping tycoon, started a freight company empire which was later purchased by FedEx. In 1991 the home was sold to Don and Kathleen Young. The Young's added a glass solarium off the back porch, in addition, they purchased the lot behind the home and built a carriage house. They were the first to run the house as a Bed and Breakfast. The Queen Anne still serves as a B & B today.

On September 28, 2005, the Queen Anne House, under its historic name, the 'Duncan House', was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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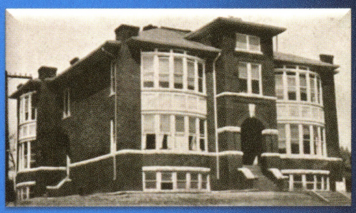
21. The Old Harrison High School

Located at the corner of Central and Cherry, this historic building was built in 1912 and served as Harrison High School until 1952 when a new high school opened. The school was then remodeled and served as the Harrison Junior High from 1952 until 1987. During the renovation, the bay windows were removed, along with most of the wood and fire escapes were added for safety. It was the first school in Boone County, Arkansas where students in the county, including those living in rural areas outside the district could obtain a 12th grade high school education for free. The completion was announced in the local paper and indicated that the building only cost $15,464.05, significantly lower than the cost of the Court House, a nearly identical building recently built.



Boone County Heritage Museum

The Boone County Heritage Museum, established in 1988 now occupies this historic site. It is operated by the Boone County Historical and Railroad Society, Inc. The museum features exhibits from the earliest settlers to the area and depicts how the Harrison forefathers colonized the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. The historic museum also features exhibits from Harrison's railroad past, a war room that highlights the role that Boone County and Arkansas soldiers played in the Civil War, the two World Wars and other conflicts since. It also houses the gun used to kill notorious bank robber, Henry Starr. Be prepared to find something new in every room throughout the Boone County Heritage Museum as you explore the original, historic Harrison High School building. When constructed in 1912, the building's architectural style most closely resembled a mixture of Romanesque and Italianate designs. The building's current style is a Prairie/ International mix. Be sure and stop in for a tour. Visit www.bchrs.org for more information.

BCHM continues to make improvements, including a monitored alarm system, while still honoring the history and integrity of the original architecture.

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2. The Boone County Courthouse
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7. The Montgomery Ward Building
8. The West Rush Historic Mural
9. The Lyric Theatre
10. The Harrison Daily Times
11. The Hotel Seville
12. The Federal Building & BRNP HQ
13. The Old Federal Building
14. The M & NA Railway Office
15. The 1st National Bank Mural
16. The Walter's Building
17. The Old Boone County Jail
18. Lake Harrison Recreation Area
19. Stiffler Spring
20. The Queen Anne B & B
21. The Original Harrison High School

HARRISON CVB

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